

mediocrity of experience, acquired by so long and arduous labour, that the remainder of my goods and my life can still be of service to you, resolve on the points which I propose to you. This done, let us go forward with one heart and will, embrace together the task of the defence of this good people, who only demand guidance in order to follow, and this doing, I hope, by the aid and grace of God, which I have so often experienced before now In difficult situations, that that which you resolve for the good and preservation of yourselves, your wives and children, in so holy, so sacred a cause—I will maintain it" (/f *le maintiendrai*}).

The "Apology" did its work most effectively. It was presented to the States-General at Delft in December 1580. Seven months later, the States, this time assembled at the Hague, returned Philip a still more crushing answer. On the 26th July 1581 they solemnly promulgated the Act of Abjuration, which declared his sovereignty in the Netherlands at an end. It is indubitably one of the most important documents in modern history, and its preamble is worthy of quotation. "As is notorious to all, a prince is established by God as sovereign and chief of his subjects in order to defend and preserve them from all injuries, oppression, and violence, as a shepherd is ordained for the defence and preservation of his sheep. Subjects are not created by God for the benefit of the prince, so as to obey him in all things which he commands, whether pious or impious, just or unjust. They are not to serve him as slaves. On the contrary, the prince is created for the subjects, without whom he cannot exist, in order that he may govern them according to right and reason, maintain and love them as a father his children, as a shepherd his sheep, and risk his body to defend and watch over them. When he does not do so, but seeks to oppress them and take away their ancient customs and privileges, and lord it over them as slaves, he ought to be no longer regarded as a prince but as a tyrant. And his subjects are entitled, according to right and reason, no longer to recognise him as their sovereign—especially when such recognition is withheld by the deliberation and authority of the Estates—and may justly abandon him and choose another in his place. Such a contingency has usually taken place when the subjects have by their prayers, requests, re-